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O 181540Z DEC 08  
FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3840  
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2506  
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2629  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1122  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1898  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 2253  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2678  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 5106  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK  
RHMFIS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1776  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001132

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. WALCH  
DRL FOR N. WILETT  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS  
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/2018  
TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC PHUM KDEM ZI  
SUBJECT: EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TEAR GASSING: POLICE BREAK UP  
PROTEST AND ZANU-PF BRAWL

REF: A. HARARE 1056  
B. HARARE 819

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Katherine Dhanani for reason 1.4 (d).

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SUMMARY  
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11. (SBU) Riot police were busy this week, tear gassing groups of both ZANU-PF and opposition supporters. Police used tear gas to break up back-to-back protests of over 500 marchers in Harare led by the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA). Riot police also used tear gas to break up a fight at the ZANU-PF headquarters between factions supporting rival candidates for the position of ZANU-PF provincial chairman for Harare province. The physical violence between members - albeit internal rivals - of the ZANU-PF reflects continued fissures within the party. No significant injuries were reported in any of the incidents. END SUMMARY.

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Hundreds March, but Little Coverage of Protests  
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12. (C) NCA organized three marches this week, two on December 16 and another on December 17. On the 16th, 500 participants in Harare and 300 in Masvingo marched to push NCA's "Three Point Plan" (transitional government, a new constitution, and free and fair elections) for democracy and development in Zimbabwe. In Masvingo, protesters marched without police interference. In Harare, however, police used tear gas and batons to disrupt the march before it even started. 51 were arrested, and NCA reported 10 sustained injuries. 20 protesters were released without charge, and the other 31 have not yet been charged or granted access to lawyers. On December 17, NCA held another march in Harare with over 600 protesters, who had nearly completed their march when riot police broke up the protest, again with

batons and tear ga. 11 were arrested and 12 sought medical treatment for relatively minor injuries. Despite the relatively good turnout, the marches were not widely covered in the press, at least partly because there were relatively few injuries or arrests. After the third march, an ebullient NCA President, Lovemore Madhuku told us that NCA is testing its marching strategy and aims to hold a third march with as many as 3,000 protesters early next week. In a recent conversation with Madhuku (ref A), we encouraged him to work with other organizations to increase the scale of these protests; however these marches continue to be solely the work of NCA and its members.

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ZANU-PF Provincial Election Turns Violent  
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¶3. (SBU) On December 16, the election for ZANU-PF Harare Provincial Chairman was held at ZANU-PF's headquarters. The election turned violent at about 4 a.m. when supporters of the two candidates "went at each other's throats," according to one witness. Supporters of the former Minister of Mines, Amos Midzi, reportedly started a brawl with supporters of Hubert Nyanhongo, Deputy Minister of Transportation, over the election for provincial chairmanship. Both had bussed in scores of supporters to help secure victory. When Midzi's supporters heard that Midzi was pulling out of the election, citing "irregularities," they reportedly attacked Nyanhongo's supporters. Riot police arrived on the scene and used water cannons and tear gas to break up the fight. ZANU-PF Deputy

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Spokesman Ephraim Masawi condemned the violence. (NOTE: Nyanhongo represents Harare South and is the sole ZANU-PF MP in all of Harare's 28 constituencies. Midzi, who was defeated in the March election to represent Epworth in parliament, was responsible for orchestrating and funding violence in Epworth after the March election and is widely feared by residents. Even after the June presidential election, he was often in Epworth organizing ZANU-PF meetings and telling residents there would be another election soon. The victor in Epworth, MDC-T MP Elijah Jembere was arrested twice this year -- including on the opening day of parliament -- on trumped-up charges of raping another MDC councilor's wife (ref B). END NOTE.)

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COMMENT  
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¶4. (C) As the economy, cholera, and the daily struggles facing Zimbabweans continue to worsen almost by the hour; the need for a political solution grows increasingly urgent. By Zimbabwean standards, NCA's protests this week were successful: strong turnout and relatively few injuries or arrests. Despite the marches' success, however, they were organized exclusively by NCA without any other NGOs. Although Madhuku has told us he believes the best way to exert pressure on the government is through efforts by the people of Zimbabwe, civil society's efforts remain fragmented. The size and scale of these street marches do not come close to reflecting the anger, frustration, and struggles people face in providing for their homes. Civil society and the MDC remain unable to translate these frustrations into effective popular action.

¶5. (C) For decades, Zimbabwean elections have been characterized by violence. However, that violence has usually been directed at the opposition. The brawl at ZANU-PF headquarters between Midzi's and Nyanhongo's supporters demonstrates both the factionalism within ZANU-PF and also the ingrained impulse of the loser to resort to violence to cling to power. With the ZANU-PF national conference set to start December 20 in Bindura, determinations of who will be "in" and "out" with the party will become increasingly clear in the coming days. Some,

like Midzi, fear losing out on the benefits of the ZANU-PF patronage system, and are likely desperate to remain within the fold. It remains to be seen if this instance of intraparty violence is a unique event or a sign of that fractures within the party are growing. Either way, the time is ripe for civil society and the political opposition to exploit these fractures. However, divisions within and between these groups constrain their ability to do so effectively. END COMMENT.

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